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## FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

Submitted by: Steven P. Kennedy

**Finding:** *(i.e., Conclusions reached after investigation and/or evaluation of facts)*

**Finding:** Public involvement in fire safety education.

I. Residents and visitors to the Tahoe Basin need education but lack input on the content, style and character, of fire safety educational videos available to the public. A public-private approach is the best answer to a viable, efficient and consistent educational outreach effort.

**Sub-finding:**

**1) Educational Environment**

a) Video is a cost effective way to educate homeowners about fuel reduction and fire protection measures.

b) Virtually all Lake Tahoe Basin households have access to DVD/VCR equipped TV's and/or computers with DVD players.

c) An entertaining fire safety video can compete with Hollywood films at Mom & Pop video rental stores.

d) An effective fire safety video can reach nearly every household in the Tahoe Basin.

e) Blanket coverage of the Tahoe Basin can be achieved through presentations to the major stakeholders including HOA's, TRPA, Air Quality and Lahontan, plus water districts, city councils, fire districts, the native plant society, environmental groups and county fish & game commissions.

Other venues include cable TV, virtual film festivals such as the Tahoe Reno International Film Festival and on-line sites such as YouTube and canonbal.org

f) Fire Chiefs and Fire Marshals in the Tahoe Basin have evaluated the video project known as, "The Cannonball Express" and acknowledged that an environmentally oriented fire safety film such as this one may be an effective item in the Fire Marshal's tool kit.

**Sub-Finding:**

**2) Entertainment Industry and Labor Force**

a) Acting talent and skilled film crews in the Tahoe Basin are adequate to create an effective fire safety video.

b) County Film Commissions on the California side can be expected to provide assistance before, during and after production.

**Sub-Finding:**

**3) The Economics of Independent Film Production**

a) Funding to implement innovative fire safety film projects in the Lake Tahoe Basin is inadequate, uncertain and difficult to qualify for.

b) Professionally produced video can cost \$1,000 per minute to create. However, consumer grade, home video cameras are capable of high quality imaging and most new home computers can store and edit video. Many students are exposed to film production in classes at school. Young acting talent will sometimes work just for the experience of being in front of a camera. The Cannonball Express, East Bay Hills version, used non-union labor and cost about \$200 per minute.

c) Most foundation grants provided by the private sector are in the \$4,000 range & require non-profit status or the assistance of another non-profit, serving as a fiscal agent. Legal fees for setting up a non-profit 501c(3) organization run about \$2,500 and require quarterly board meetings and accounting. Most County Fish & Game Commission grants are in the \$500 range while the State Code covering allowable projects is vague on the subject of educational films for adults. This encourages conflicting interpretations on the legality of funding environmental videos.

d) Written proof of interested audiences (on letterhead stationery) is mandatory for most video grant apps.

e) Foundation officers demand endorsements from vested interests for progressive political causes that are best promoted via video. This conservative approach by donor organizations can strangle artistic creativity and stifle innovation.

f) Multiple grants and partnerships are often required for full funding. If one party balks then the whole deal collapses like a house of cards (as for a proposed four way, \$19,000 funding package backed by the Contra Costa County Department of Agriculture, Contra Costa Television and the Alameda County Fish & Game Committee, that failed to fund the East Bay hills version of "The Cannonball Express").

g) The Fire Safe California Grants Clearinghouse has an application process designed for fuel reduction projects with educational and outreach video programs tied to those specific projects at those specific locations. So the application process for stand alone video production funding is a square peg in a round hole from the get go. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that any of the agencies associated with the Clearinghouse will receive funding from Congress in any given fiscal year. Hence, the Grants Clearinghouse has never, ever funded a fire safety video.

h) Years of film industry experience & several film festival prizes are almost prerequisites for competitive video grant applications. The catch is that people with Hollywood experience aren't going to mess with government red tape to create art house projects for small audiences, with little potential for profit or film festival prize money.

i) Start up costs for especially innovative and original fire safety/environmental video projects can run as high as \$30,000 including pre-production phases exceeding 12 years, (as for "The Cannonball Express").

j) Fire Departments may have in-house video production capability but their efforts, while earnest, tend to preach to the choir while lacking entertainment value. Some Fire Chiefs and Fire Marshals may aspire to be movie stars and may have witnessed and even filmed some extreme fire behavior. However, while the citizens may find the destructive power of fire fascinating, they have little interest in "talking heads" and are seldom motivated by doom and gloom.

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Forwarded to: CFSC

PROPOSED

**Sub-Finding:**

**4) Fire Environment**

a) Turn-of-the-Century clear cut logging and fire exclusion policies since then, have left a legacy of dense and dying tree stands that are prone to crowning wild fire. Ground fuel loads are also heavy.

b) Recent fuel reduction projects have barely made a dent in the problem while the forest thinning process must be repeated every 20 years. This backlog of projects, on going expense and environmental resistance to pile burning and forest thinning suggest that major public relations work needs to be done.

c) Homes of all wood construction, built in the suburban wildlands interface zone, are the norm in the Tahoe Basin. Another Angora type fire can be expected to occur soon.

**Sub-Finding:**

**5) Political Environment**

a) Bureaucratic turf battles between Federal, State and County agencies have hampered coalition building and effective action.

b) A conceptual straight jacket, evident in the near total reliance on defensible space in existing fire safety videos, is maintained by Fire Marshals relying on fire exclusion solutions provided by the military industrial complex. This doctrine is tolerated by a general public living in ignorance of the role of fire in nature.

Meanwhile, the people exhibit a peculiar blindness to the human risk in fighting wildland fire and the extreme cost of fighting wildland fire with the goal of maintaining a fire exclusion policy.

c) American soft power is thriving on the internet through web sites like YouTube.

**Background and Supporting Evidence:** *(A short statement justifying the Finding and describing desired outcome(s); usually no more than half a page.)*

**THE THIRD TASK OF THE COMMISSION**

To recommend ways to effectively educate homeowners and other members of the public on appropriate fuel-reduction and fire-protection measures that they can take.

**Background:**

The Angora Fire destroyed over 250 homes in the South Lake Tahoe area. Just a few days later, another fire destroyed four or five additional homes near Tahoe City.

This second WUI fire demonstrated that...

- a) No amount of available fire safety outreach and education was going to motivate homeowners into clearing pine needles away from their homes.
- b) A totally new approach to fire education and outreach was needed.

This problem will be resolved when the authorities provide homeowners with the proper carrot and stick to encourage them to do for the environment what they are not always willing to do....

- a) for the Fire Marshals
- b) for the bureaucrats
- c) for the insurance agents
- d) for the tenants
- e) for the neighbors
- f) for themselves

**Recommendation(s)** *(Based upon an analysis of the Finding, the following recommendation(s) should be made to the Governors):*

**Recommendation:** Residents and visitors to the Tahoe Basin should have immediate input on the content, style and character of fire safety videos available to the public through a video competition in the Tahoe Reno area. Public agencies should work with the citizens to create, promote and then screen the best of these fire safety videos in a viable, efficient and consistent educational outreach effort.

**Sub-Recommendation:**

**1) Educational Environment**

- a) Film production teams should be encouraged to compete with the goal of creating the best possible fire safety and environmental video.
- b) The Tahoe Reno Int'l Film Festival should be encouraged to set up a one time, special film entry category for the digital and virtual

2008 Festival, so that producers of documentaries, shorts, narrative features and educational films can compete to make the video that has the best possible chance of preventing another Angora type fire from striking the Tahoe Basin. Raw video footage of the Angora Fire will be available for downloading at <http://www.canonbal.org>

The judging panel should be Fire Marshals from Tahoe Basin Fire Departments or their designees.

The contest requirements should permit the entry of any film between 10 and 60 minutes in length on the topic of suburban forest fires, fire safety and the environment. The target audience should be adults living in the suburban-wildlands interface zone in the Tahoe Basin. The film should educate, motivate and entertain while exploring the power of mother nature, best friends, last chances and redemption. The film should be a soft sell fire safety video that...

- a) persuades people to take their forest fuel reduction problems seriously, in their backyards and beyond.
- b) persuades Tahoe residents to support public and private fuel reduction and forest thinning projects that allow us to do for Mother Nature what we won't let Mother Nature do for herself.

**Sub-Recommendation:**

**2) Entertainment Industry and Labor Force**

- a) The soft power of the entertainment industry and the creative talent of its workers and stars needs to be harnessed to the cause of vegetation management in the forests of the Tahoe Basin.
- b) County Film Commissions need to build closer ties to the agencies that work to preserve the scenic backdrops and viewsapes that bring film makers to the Tahoe Basin.

**Sub-Recommendation:**

**3) The Economics of Independent Film Production**

- a) Fire Marshals need to update and outsource their fire safety videos, work with foundation program officers to encourage the development of suitable grant programs, avoid meddling in the creative process and encourage wealthy donors and corporations to contribute to foundations.
- b) Fire Chiefs need to work more closely with County Film Commissioners to ensure that tax dollars (from free spending crews working on major film productions) keep flowing into the scenic and Hollywood friendly Tahoe Basin.

**Sub-Recommendation:**

**4) Fire Environment**

- a) Fire Marshals need to find a voice for their profession in the environmental movement by developing fire safe landscaping at their stations and actively supporting forest fuel reduction projects such as biomass, control burning and pile burning.
- b) Fire Chiefs should work closely with TRPA officials to reconcile environmental and fire safety regulations and so reach compromises on soil erosion and defensible space issues.

**Sub-Recommendation:**

**5) Political Environment**

- a) Fire Chiefs should protect their sales tax generated revenue streams by joining the "Keep Tahoe Blue" coalition.

b) Fire Marshals should be encouraged to develop broad personal networks through membership in environmental organizations and forest products associations.

c) Fire Marshals should beware of the military industrial complex and seek solutions to residential fire safety issues in the best of American soft power.

**Impacts of Implementation:** *(The implementation of any Recommendation is likely to have specific impacts. Consider potential consequences related to each of the following areas):*

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is REQUIRED (Best Estimate):

☐ Cost

A couple of thousand dollars in prize money and a photo op with a handshake from the Governor(s) should sufficiently motivate amateur film makers to collaborate on the production of an innovative environmental fire safety video.

Fire Marshals can find a few hours in their busy schedules to judge fire safety films or find alternates. The right video from an extensive tool kit of fire safety and environmental videos can warm up the coldest audience of homeowners and let the Fire Marshal speak freely about common sense fire safety precautions.

☐ Funding source

The Tahoe Reno International Film Festival <http://www.t-riff.org> can scrape up some prize money from wealthy donors in the Incline Village area who will be happy to rub elbows with promising Hollywood talent. An alternative source of funding is the County Film Commissions or the California Film Commission. (Community Fire Safety Committee Chair Ruben Grijalva is a member of the California Film Commission.

☐ Staffing

Expanding an existing Film Festival Competition should be no great burden on the Tahoe Reno International Film Festival. Every entry arrives with an entry fee of approximately \$45 so the Competition should be self funding.

☐ Existing regulations and/or laws

Governor Schwarzenegger should direct his legal staff to clarify the wording in the State Fish & Game Code that covers the expenditure of fine money by the County Fish & Game Commissions so as to specifically authorize the funding of environmental videos destined for adult audiences in non-scholastic settings. ie

**13103. Expenditures from the fish and wildlife propagation fund of any county may be made only for the following purposes:**

**(a) Public education relating to the scientific principles of fish and wildlife conservation, consisting of supervised formal instruction carried out pursuant to a planned curriculum and aids to education such as literature, audio and video recordings, training models, and nature study facilities.**

Governor Gibbons should direct his legal staff to draft legislation that sets aside some portion of fish and game fine monies for videos about vegetation management that directly or indirectly benefit wildlife in the State of Nevada.

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is OPTIONAL:

- ☐ Operational
- ☐ Social
- ☐ Political
- ☐ Policy
- ☐ Health and Safety
- ☐ Environmental
- ☐ Interagency